

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 0178

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, ET
SUBJ: HOUSE SEARCHES SUSPENDED IN ADDIS

REF: A. 76 ADDIS ABABA 11935, B. 76 ADDIS ABABA 11707

1. JAN 12 ETHIOPIAN HERALD REPORTED PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVT (EPMG) ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SEARCH FOR FIREARMS IN ADDIS ABABA HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED. EPMG SPOKESMAN SAID GOVT WOULD INFORM PUBLIC IN ADVANCE IF AND WHEN HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCHES IN ADDIS RENEWED. SPOKESMAN ADVISED PUBLIC TO BE ALERT AGAINST ANTI-REVOLUTIONARIES WHO MAY BE LOOTERS POSING AS MEN-IN-UNIFORM.

2. SUSPENSION OF HOUSE SEARCH APPEARS RESULT OF SEVERAL FACTORS:

- A) INCREASED ALIENATION OF ADDIS CITIZENRY CAUSED BY SEARCHES;
- B) POSSIBLE CHANGE IN TACTICS BY REORGANIZED PMAC;
- C) LACK OF SUBSTANTIAL SUCCESS; AND POSSIBLLY,
- D) PRESSURE BY OAU MEMBERS AND DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY.

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INDISCRIMINATE AND UNSOPHISTICATED NATURE OF SEARCHES HAS DISTURBED MANY ADDIS RESIDENTS. REPORTS OF THEFTS BY SEARCHERS, ROUGH TREATMENT OF SOME PERSONS (INCLUDING PMAC SUPPORTERS), AND INCREASE IN GENERAL BANDITRY RESULTING FROM CONFUSION OVER SEARCHERS' IDENTITY HAVE REPORTEDLY CAUSED DISSATISFACTION AMONG VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF ADDIS POPULACE.

3. REORGANIZATION OF PMAC HAS LED TO GUARDED RUMORS OF MODERATION IN TACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF ONGOING ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION. DELIMINATION OF PMAC MEMBER'S POWERS AND REALIGNMENT OF PMAC RESPONSIBILITIES HAS LED TO PERCEPTION BY SOME THAT PMAC MORE CONFIDENT AND THUS PREPARED TO TAKE MORE MODERATE STANCE ON SECURITY MATTERS SUCH AS HOUSE SEARCHES.

4. MOST PROBABLE REASON FOR SUSPENSION IS FAILURE OF SEARCH PROGRAM. RELIABLE SOURCES REPORT WHILE MANY WEAPONS CONFISCATED DURING SEARCHES, MAJOR OBJECTIVE --TO CAPTURE DISSIDENT LITERATURE, PRINTING MACHINES, AND PERSONS ON WANTED LIST UNSUCCESSFUL. CONTINUED PUBLICATION OF UNDERGROUND LITERATURE IN ADDIS DESPITE CONCERTED EPMG EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE SOURCES MAY HAVE CONVINCED EPMG THAT NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS OUTWEIGHED DIMINISHING RETURNS OF CONTINUED SEARCHES.

5. FINALLY, THERE SOME SPECULATION SEARCH OF SUDANESE DIPLOMATIC RESIDENCES, WHICH LED TO HIGH LEVEL DEMARCHE BY DEAN OF ADDIS DIPLOMATIC CORPS, MAY HAVE BEEN FACTOR IN SUSPENSION. GENERALIZED GRUMBLINGS AND COMPLAINTS BY OAU MEMBERS WITH CALLS TO RELOCATE OAU HEADQUARTERS PLUS GENERAL DISCONTENT WITHIN CORPS OVER DETERIORATION OF AMENITIES ENJOYED UNDER FORMER REGIME, MAY HAVE PLAYED ROLE IN ENDING SEARCHES. HOWEVER, HEAD OF AFRICAN DIVISION, MOFA TOLD EMBOSFS ONLY LAST WEEK THAT WHILE MOFA CONCERNED ABOUT SEARCHES OF DIPLOMATIC RESIDENCES, ITS CONCERN NOT SHARED BY REST OF EPMG.

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6. EMBASSY BELIEVES SELECTIVE SEARCHES OF SUSPECTED ANTI-GOVT HOMES LIKELY TO CONTINUE AS IN PAST. PRESS REPORT NOTES TEMPORARY NATURE OF SUSPENSION OF SEARCHES, AND EMBASSY UNWILLING SPECULATE WHEN OR IF SUCH SEARCHES MAY BE RESUMED.
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